

MARCH
2024

First United Methodist Church

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Mocksville, NC 27028
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Filling the Vacant

⁴³ “When an unclean spirit leaves a person, it wanders through dry places looking for a place to rest. But it doesn’t find any. ⁴⁴ Then it says, ‘I’ll go back to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the place vacant, cleaned up, and decorated. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself. They go in and make their home there. That person is worse off at the end than at the beginning. This is the way it will be also for this evil generation.” Matthew 12:43-45 (CEB)

The time for Spring Cleaning is almost here. Many of us will clear closets and drawers, giving away what we don’t need. Or maybe even filling garbage bags with unusable items we have held on to for too long. Ridding the space of old, worn out, or no longer needed items is freeing. When the work is done, we can sit back and survey what has been accomplished. We may even revel at the extra space we have.

Moving often has taught me that extra space is not always good. Areas that are empty of “stuff” give rise to the feeling that more “stuff” can be purchased. Extra space means not giving away items that we no longer use. An empty closet means we can keep those clothes we no longer can (or are able to) wear. When a space is empty, we feel we need to fill it with something. We do not like vacancies in our lives, so we fill it with whatever we find. Or as the Scripture says, whatever finds our vacancy.

The season of Lent is a time for spring cleaning too. On Ash Wednesday, we remember our own mortality and are invited to practice Holy Lent. The invitation is for participating in spiritual practices that will rid us of the unnecessary baggage of life we carry so that we can move closer to God. We bag up and throw away habits that focus on us and not God. We spruce up our time for personal reflection through Bible Study. Any of the unclean spirits or activities in our lives are swept out. Like cleaning out a closet, the danger of a vacancy in our spiritual life is that an unclean spirit might seek to live in the vacant space.

Matthew Chapter 12 is a series of Jesus’ healing works and teaching of the crowds. The legal experts are present during the teaching of Jesus recorded above. Jesus speaks of the unclean spirits who leave a person. They go around looking for a place to reside. They find nothing appropriate for their needs. Remembering the good life they had in their previous host, they return. Finding the space vacant, they move in and invite other evil or unclean spirits to reside with them. Vacant space provided a place for the unclean to live.

When a space in your spiritual life becomes vacant, fill that space with a good habit. Pick up a spiritual practice such as prayer, Scripture reading, meditation, walking, reflection and contemplation, coloring, knitting, or anything that offers a place for drawing closer to God. Fill those vacant spaces with God. Then the vacant spaces will be too full for those old habits and spirits to find room.

Let us pray: Holy God, you fill us with love and grace. Teach us how to clean out the old habits and practices that keep us from you. Then pour yourself into those vacant spaces. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Grace and Peace,

Lori Anne



SATURDAY, MARCH 23 2 PM—3:30 PM
On the Sanctuary side of the street

Happy March,

Few things excite me more than seeing a sign on a table that reads, “Free Books!” Several months ago, I picked up a copy of Gerard W. Hughes’ *God of Surprises* at one of these treasure chest tables. For Lent, I have taken on more time for quiet reflection and reading. Finally, I started reading this book, which includes daring invitations to engage in spiritual practices that more deeply reveal the goodness and mystery of God.

Hughes suggests, “As with the passion narrative, so too we should approach the Gospels’ resurrection accounts without, as far as possible, any preconceived ideas of its theological meaning, simply putting ourselves in the Gospel scenes and begging to know the joy of Christ’s resurrection” (pg. 134).

What a good word this is for me to hear. We journey through Lent and Holy Week each year. We have our Resurrection Sunday traditions. My prayer this year though, is that I do not stay in my head, for I might just miss the holy mystery and AWEsomeness of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. How can I put myself in the Gospel scenes and beg, with every fiber of my being, to know and live the joy of Christ’s resurrection? What difference would this make in my life? How could this help me better love God and love my neighbor?

Hughes suggests we start embodying the full-scope joy of Christ’s resurrection through the practice of reading Scripture (pg. 137). *Will you join me in reading these passages this month? Let’s talk about them!*

Here is some background reading, apart from the passion and resurrection accounts in the Gospels, which can be helpful in contemplating the passion, death and resurrection:

- The Last Supper: Psalms 113–118 (which were recited at the Passover meal).
- The agony in the garden: Hebrews 4:14–5:10.
- Jesus’ arrest and trial: Psalms 35, 38; 40, 55, 57, 64, 69, 70, 102, 142, 143; Isaiah 50:4–7; 52:13–53:12.
- Way of the cross: Psalms 55, 72; Colossians 1:15–20.
- Crucifixion: Psalms 22, 31, 88; Philippians 2:6–8; 2 Corinthians 5:7–18.
- Taking down from the cross and burial: Psalms 42, 74, 130; Isaiah 42:1–9; 1 Corinthians 1:17–31; Hebrews 9:11–28; Wisdom 3:1–9; 4:7–15.
- Resurrection: Psalms 2, 8, 19, 24, 62, 116, 118; Isaiah 30:18–26; 35:1–10; 43:8–13; Ephesians 1:15–23; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7.

Peace,
Pastor Hannah

MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS

IN MEMORY

ELEANOR WILSON

By Wayne & Anita Long
By Charles & Patsy Crenshaw
By Mike Mike & Jean Hinshaw
By Carolyn Cartner
By Don & Sarah Wood

IN MEMORY

LETHA MCDANIELS

By Charles & Patsy Crenshaw
JOYCE WHITAKER TEAGUE
By Edward & Cathy Bass
MARY HENDRICKS
By Roger & Deborah Spillman

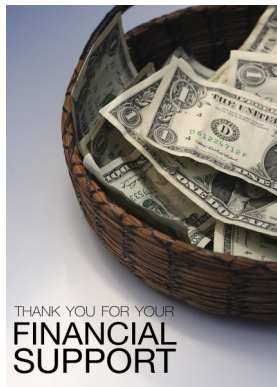
WEDNESDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP MEAL MARCH 6
Menu is Meatloaf, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans, Coleslaw, Rolls & Desserts
Proceeds will go to Family Promise.

Joyful Movement, for grades K-5, will be in the FLC after the Wednesday Night Meal Wednesday, March 6.



Our preschool enrollment hit the ground running! I am so excited to say that our enrollment and interest in the program has grown an exceptional amount. So much so that I am opening a 5th classroom! In all of our years in operation, we have never had this much growth. I ask that you keep our preschool in your prayers as we undergo these absolutely wonderful changes during this next school year. Our first summer preschool enrollment is also about to kick off! This is a new 10 week program that we are offering to the community and a way to expand the preschool in ways that we see a need. We are always hoping to get more involved with the church and have the church be involved with our program and students. If you are interested in volunteering, being on our substitute list, or purchasing snacks or supplies for the preschool, please let me know! In the coming months we will be preparing for graduation. We will have 13 students graduate in May. If you are interested in "adopting" a graduate and purchasing a Bible for them to be presented at graduation, please contact Katie as soon as possible. The Bible purchase would be \$15 that would go right into the preschool fund to get these for all of our graduates. You can contact Katie by phone (336) 753-1900 or email katie@firstumcmocksville.org.
Katie Roberts

UNITED METHODIST MEN BREAKFAST MEETING
Sunday, March 10, 7:30 AM Fellowship Hall



Thank you for your generous financial support. Your ongoing gifts are vital to the ministries of FUMC!



Mar. 07 Kaitlyn Foil
 Mar. 09 Patsy Brewer
 Mar. 11 Jerrie Cozart
 Melza Craven
 Mar. 14 Charles Woodruff, Jr.
 Mar. 24 Mike Hendrix
 Mar. 26 Carol Dyson
 Mar. 27 Elmer Stoneman
 Mar. 30 Harold Vickers

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

3/28 Maundy Thursday, 7 PM Sanctuary
 3/29 Good Friday, 7 PM Sanctuary
3/31 Easter Sunday
 7 AM Sunrise Service—Rose Cemetery
 8:45 AM Service in FLC
 10:55 AM Service in Sanctuary

FINANCIAL REPORT	JAN 2024
Tithes/Offerings	\$43,999
Memorials	405
WS Foundation	2,713
Other	400
TOTAL INCOME	\$44,804
TOTAL EXPENSES	(36,841)
TOTAL	\$ 7,963

Lou's Lines



*Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice.
 Each will be like a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest,
 like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary
 land.*

~Isaiah 32:1-2

"Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand..."

As soon as I hear these words, a beautiful melody comes to mind and I am immediately transported to the back row of the church where I grew up. We sang it often, and I loved hearing Mom's strong alto voice singing beside me. I loved singing this hymn and in general, thought I knew what it was about. But of course, I was very young, and had no idea the weight or importance of the words. I didn't even know what the word 'fain' meant. But it didn't matter at that point in my life. I could tell by the music and by the way that the adults sang it, that it was a strong and meaningful hymn.

Hymn lyrics are a wonderful way to focus our minds on the cross during this Lenten season. This beautiful hymn is a perfect example of the rich poetry used by early hymn writers. The cross, considered a place of death, provides shelter in its shadow, a home in the wilderness, a place of rest from our burdens. It is thought that the poet, Elizabeth Clephane, was referring to a passage in Isaiah 32:1-2. Whatever the inspiration, it is surely beautiful imagery for something that was originally intended to cause so much pain.

As Christians, how blessed we are to take up that cross, to be content to let the world go by, and to gladly take our stand beneath the cross of Jesus. And how fortunate we are to have so many beautiful hymns to remind us of the powerful love and grace given freely to us. Take some time to listen, revisit, and remember what it was like to sing those songs as a child and how meaningful they have become to you as you have grown in your faith.

Lou Ann Wilson, Director of Music



SUNDAY, MARCH 31st

IN OUR Thoughts and Prayers

Ann Stayer

PO Box 333
 256 North Carolina Circle
 Mocksville NC 27028

Molly Jo McClamrock

Bermuda Commons
 Room # 403
 316 NC Hwy 801
 Advance NC 27006

Elmer Stoneman

100 Luftee Lane
 Holly Springs NC 27540

Christine Woodruff

Davie Rehab Room 205
 498 Madison Rd.
 Mocksville NC 27028

Billie Bean

Brookdale Assisted Living
 2201 Statesville Road
 Salisbury, NC 28147



Thursday, March 21 YAH will visit Rockford General Store in Dobson and Shiloh General Store in Hamptonville. Lunch will be at the Shiloh General Store deli. Please add your name to the list by March 19 by calling the church office 336.751.2503. Will depart the FLC parking lot at 9:30 AM